

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAB-01 /059 W

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R 211334Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8593

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 3836

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JO

SUBJECT: REACTION TO NEW GOVERNMENT

1. WHILE LOCAL REACTION TO NEW GOVERNMENT SEEMS GENERALLY FAVORABLE, ONE INSIGHT INTO ITS MEANING WAS PROVIDED US BY AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON NEW MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE ADNAN ABU ODEH.

2. ABU ODEH IS AN UNUSUALLY OUTSPOKEN PALESTINIAN WHO FAVORS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT AND BECAUSE HE WAS A (BLACK) "SEPTEMBER" MINISTER I THE JORDAN GOVERNMENT (ALSO MININFO THEN), CONSIDERS HIMSELF PERSONA NON-GRATA WITH THE PLO.

3. ABU ODEH HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A YEAR'S FELLOWSHIP AT HARVARD. HE SAID THAT HE WAS ENORMOUSLY SURPRISED AT THE FLOOD OF CABLES OF CONGRATULATIONS WHICH HE AND OTHER NEW MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD RECEIVED. HE HAS BEEN A MINISTER A NUMBER OF TIMES AND SO HAS A BASIS FOR COMPARISON. HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE OUTPOURING IS NOT THAT HE OR OTHERS ARE PARTICULARLY APPRECIATED, BUT THAT THE PUBLIC HAS FOUND THIS WAY OF EXPRESSING
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THEIR PLEASURE AT THE DEMISE OF THE RIFAI PREMIERSHIP.

(ODEH HAS BEEN A MINISTER UNDER RIFAI AND IS KNOWN TO BE CAUTIOUS IN HIS CRITICISM OF RIFAI.)

4. ODEH ALSO SAID THAT AT THE FIRST BADRAN CABINET MEETING, ATTENDED BY KING HUSSEIN, HE MADE A MAJOR POINT IN THE KING'S PRESENCE OF WARNING THAT A NEW INFORMATION POLICY WAS NEEDED WHICH GOT AWAY FROM PRESENTATION OF PERSONALITIES ON TELEVISION AND RADIO AND SPENT MORE TIME IN EXPLAINING PROBLEMS AND ISSUES. ODEH SAID HE GOT KING'S FULL SUPPORT FROM HIS COLLEAGUES. HOWEVER, HE IS NOT SURE HOW LONG IT WILL LAST AND EXPECTS SOON TO BE GETTING CALLS FROM DISGRUNTLED MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY WHOSE PICTURES WERE FLASHED ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN FOR ONLY A FEW SECONDS.

5. MORE INTERESTING, ODEH SAYS HE WILL TELL THE KING PRIVATELY OF HIS IMPRESSIONS AFTER RETURNING TO JORDAN AFTER A YEAR ABROAD. TWO POINTS IMPRESSED HIM: (A) JORDAN IS FAST LOSING ITS MIDDLE CLASS BECAUSE OF INFLATION AND OTHER ECONOMIC FACTORS, AND (B) JORDANIANS HAVE REVERTED TO THE "BOOTY ETHIC", INHERENT IN THE BEDOUIN RAIDING TRADITION, BUT WHICH NOW TAKES THE FORM OF A PREOCCUPATION WITH AMASSING WEALTH. BOTH FEATURES ARE INTERRELATED. THE LATTER POINT MEANS JORDANIANS AT THE TOP OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC HEAP ARE OBLIVIOUS OR NEARLY SO TO SUCH CRYING PROBLEMS AS MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND LEBANON IN THEIR PRE-OCCUPATION WITH LAND SALES AND THE BUILDING BOOM.

6. COMMENT: ODEH'S INSIGHTS ARE SHARPLY DRAWN AND IN THE MAIN VALID IN OUR JUDGMENT. CLEARLY THEY CANNOT BE GENERALIZED TOO FAR, BUT ARE INDICATIVE OF SOME OF THE MAJOR DOMESTIC TRENDS ON WHICH WE WILL BE PROVIDING SOME DETAILED ASSESSMENTS SHORTLY. PICKERING

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